

Flash Flood/Flood Safety

What is usually the biggest thunderstorm related killer in Missouri every year? **Flash Floods!!** Until last year (2003) flash flood and river flood events have typically killed more people in Missouri by almost a 10 to 1 margin. The 19 tornado deaths in 2003 will change that, but still, flash floods have killed many more people over the past 14 years. As Chart 1 shows, there have been more flood related deaths every year except for 1991, 2002, and 2003. The totals over the 14-year period stand at: **Flood Deaths 82, Tornado Deaths 27.**

Many people do not realize the power of flowing water. Trees, buildings, automobiles, and people are easily swept away by flood waters.

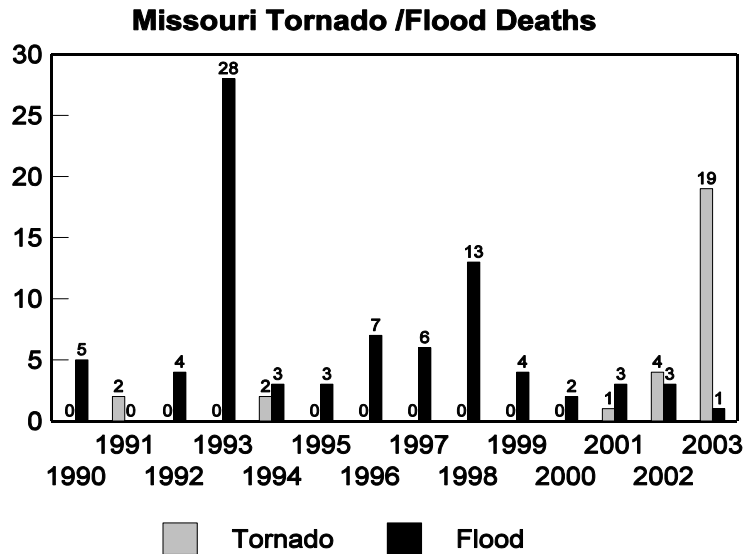


Chart 1



Many people who die in a flash flood die in their vehicle, and Missouri is no exception. The 1 flash flood related death in 2003 involved a vehicle. Areas that have become major problems are **LOW WATER CROSSINGS!** As the name implies, during low water there is usually no problem. However, when the water rises, especially quickly as in a flash flood, low water crossings become **DEATH TRAPS.** On average, it only takes about **2 feet of water to make a car float.** Once floating, it will be swept downstream and often overturn, trapping the occupants inside. The National Weather Service (NWS) has produced a videotape about low-water crossings; **The Hidden Danger, Low-Water Crossings.** Contact your local NWS office for details.

NEVER drive into a flooded area! Be especially cautious at night when darkness will often hide flood dangers. If you live in a flood prone area, have a plan of action in case flooding strikes. Stay tuned to the latest weather developments and be ready to move quickly. Abandon personal property and move to higher ground.

Camping near small rivers is very popular, but can also be very dangerous. Remember that heavy rain upstream may lead to serious flooding at your location with little or no warning. Avoid camping along small rivers or streams when heavy rain is in the forecast.

